

CLAIMS

1. A process for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising the steps of:
the buyer submitting a service request to a broker for auctioning;
5 the buyer specifying at the start of the auction the number N of best bids to be
considered from the auction;
the broker making the number N available to bidders;
the broker notifying the buyer of the identities of the N lowest bids; and
the buyer selecting a bidder from one of the N lowest bids or choosing not to execute
10 the job.

2. A process as in claim 1, wherein the broker does not allow the buyer to
consider any bids greater than the Nth bid.

15 3. A process as in claim 1, wherein the bidders can bid any amount as long as they
beat an outstanding bid by more than a predetermined amount.

4. A process as in claim 1, wherein the service request is for print services.

20 5. A process as in claim 1, wherein the broker is an electronic broker operating at a
node in an information exchange network.

6. A process as in claim 5, wherein the information exchange network is the
Internet.

25 7. A process as in claim 1, further comprising the step of the broker making
available to the bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the
buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions.

30 8. A process for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising the steps of:

the buyer submitting a service request to a broker for auctioning;
the broker making available to potential bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions; and
the potential bidders considering the rating in deciding on bidding.

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9. A process as in claim 8, wherein the rating includes the number of service requests completed with respect to the number of service requests submitted in prior auctions.

10 10. A process as in claim 8, wherein the service request is for printing services.

11. A process as in claim 8, wherein the broker is an electronic broker operating at a node in an information exchange network.

15 12. A process as in claim 11, wherein the information exchange network is the Internet.

13. A system for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:
means for the buyer to submit a service request to a broker for auctioning;
20 means for the buyer to specify at the start of the auction the number N of best bids to be considered from the auction;
means for the broker to make N available to bidders; and
means for the buyer to select a bidder from one of the N best bids.

25 14. A system as in claim 13, wherein the broker is configured such that it does not allow the buyer to consider any bids greater than the Nth bid.

15. A system as in claim 13, wherein the broker is configured such that the bidders can bid any amount as long as they beat an outstanding bid by more than a
30 predetermined amount.

16. A system as in claim 13, wherein the service request is for print services.

17. A system as in claim 13, wherein the broker is an electronic broker operating
5 at a node in an information exchange network.

18. A system as in claim 17, wherein the information exchange network is the
Internet.

10 19. A system as in claim 13, further comprising means for the broker to make
available to the bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the
buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions.

15 20. A broker system for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:
means for receiving from the buyer a service request for auctioning;
means for making available to potential bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating
includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions, wherein the
potential bidders consider the rating in deciding on bidding; and
means for receiving bids from the bidders.

20 21. A broker system as in claim 20, wherein the rating includes the number of
service requests completed with respect to the number of service requests submitted in
prior auctions.

25 22. A broker system as in claim 20, wherein the service request is for printing
services.

30 23. A broker system as in claim 20, further comprising means to communicate
with an information exchange network, wherein the buyer and the bidders communicates
with the broker system via the information exchange network.

24. A broker system as in claim 23, wherein the information exchange network is the Internet.

5 25. A network system for auctioning services, comprising:

one or more nodes for buyers to access the network;

one or more nodes for bidders to access the network; and

a broker system for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:

means for the buyer to submit a service request to a broker for auctioning;

10 means for the buyer to specify at the start of the auction the number N of best bids to be considered from the auction;

means for the broker to make N available to bidders; and

means for the buyer to select a bidder from one of the N best bids.

15 26. A network system for auctioning services, comprising:

one or more nodes for buyers to access the network;

one or more nodes for bidders to access the network; and

a broker system for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:

means for receiving from the buyer a service request for auctioning;

20 means for making available to potential bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions, wherein the potential bidders consider the rating in deciding on bidding; and

means for receiving bids from the bidders.